

## Legislative Testimony

Concerning Funding for Medical Interpretation  
February 18, 2009

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today. My name is Luisa Rivera Pizzaro, and I am a Care Coordinator for the Medical Home Partnership through the Hispanic Health Council. I wish to indicate my strong opposition to the proposed elimination of funding for medical interpretation.

As a care coordinator working with families who have children with special health care needs, I visit the hospital frequently and I can attest to the serious need for the professional, in-person medical interpretation service. I have witnessed families using their own children as interpreters as well as hospital employees, such as custodians and security guards because there was no one available to translate for them. HIPAA Anyone?

When qualified, trained interpreters are not available, the possibility of a patient being misdiagnosed or undiagnosed, receive inappropriate or delayed care, or medical orders not followed as specified, injury or death may result.

Current research indicates that over 90 million people (including English speaking individuals) in the U.S. struggle to understand even basic health information such as reading materials and prescription labels, filling out medical and insurance forms, and communicating with their provider. In CT alone, 65 different languages are spoken by low income residents with limited English proficiency.

Quality care is a goal of the health care profession. Medical interpretation increases health literacy, which increases exponentially the person's capacity to make informed health decisions in regards to their own care. Can you imagine yourself in a situation where you have a medical emergency, and when taken to the hospital, no one speaks your language? Empathy, please!

Medical interpretation is critical to the health and wellbeing of many CT residents, and I strongly urge you restore in full the funding for medical interpretation.